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ABSTRACT

A study examined the stages of acquisition of Spanish definite articles by two groups of English-speaking learners enrolled in their first semester of Spanish. The approach taken was to analyze writing samples produced by the groups at different times during the semester, to obtain the basis for a pseudo-longitudinal analysis of article usage. The main goal was to expose variability in the students' interlanguage systems and to propose early developmental stages in the acquisition of articles. Results support studies postulating a natural order of acquisition, and showed a relatively significant incidence of first-language (L1) transfer consistent with the weak form of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. L1 interference seems to be only one of many factors in acquisition. Existing theories on natural order of acquisition and interlanguage provide a framework for analyzing the results. Interaction of several factors (simplification, communicative value, frequency of input, first language transfer) was useful in accounting or some of the stages of acquisition suggested by these results. Contains 18 references. (MSE)

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Acquisition of Spanish Definite Articles by English-Speaking Learners of Spanish

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Acquisition of Spanish Definite Articles by English-Speaking Learners of Spanish

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This study examines the stages of acquisition of Spanish definite articles by two groups of English-speaking learners enrolled in their first semester of Spanish. The approach taken was to analyze writing samples produced by the groups at different times in the semester in order to acquire the basis for a pseudo-longitudinal analysis of article usage. The main goal was to expose the variability in their interlanguage system and to propose early developmental stages of acquisition of the articles by learners of an introductory course. The results supported studies that postulate a natural order of acquisition. The results also showed a relatively significant incidence of first-language (L1) transfer consistent with the weak form of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. The L1 interference, therefore, seems to be only one of many factors in the acquisition. VanPatten's ideas on a natural order of acquisition and Ellis's Interlanguage Theory provided a frame for analyzing the results. The interaction of several factors (simplification, communicative value, frequency of input, and first language transfer) proposed by VanPatten were useful in accounting for some of the stages of acquisition suggested in this study.

INTRODUCTION

Research in the past two decades has supported claims of natural stages in second language acquisition. These studies have provided evidence against the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which states that all errors in a second language can be predicted by identifying the differences between the learner's native language and the target language (Ellis, 1990). Morpheme studies of the 1970s asserted that learners follow a certain order of acquisition regardless of language background, age (Ellis, 1990), method, text, teacher, or even error correction (VanPatten, 1987). More recent studies have illustrated more clearly the developmental stages that learners pass through in their acquisition of target grammatical structures. These studies have revealed patterns of acquisition of morphemes such as the copulas *ser/estar* and the prepositions *por/para* (VanPatten, 1987; Guntermann, 1992a and b; Ryan and Lafford, 1992; Lafford and Ryan, 1995). Other explanations, such as markedness (Rutherford, 1982; VanPatten, 1987; Guntermann, 1992a and b; Perdue and Klein, 1992) and cognitive theories (Gass, 1988, 1994; VanPatten, 1989; Tomlin and Villa, 1994; Bialystok, 1994), have sought to explain what is known as the Natural Order of Acquisition (VanPatten, 1987). One area that has been neglected, however, is the acquisition of Spanish definite articles by English-speaking learners.

The purpose of this study is to examine the acquisition of Spanish definite articles by two groups of English-speaking learners, with particular regard to the variability in their interlanguage systems. The main goal is to propose early developmental stages of acquisition of the definite article by the learners. We analyze these acquisition patterns based on Bickerton's (1975) "dynamic paradigm," a notion that "seeks to describe exactly what learners do in their developing interlanguage systems rather than how closely they approximate the target" (Master, 1988, p. 5). As Van Patten (1987, p. 102) pointed out 10 years ago, "there is a dearth of research detailing the acquisition or development of any one particular syntactic or morphological feature."

In light of these objectives, this analysis proposes to answer the following questions:

1. What stages of acquisition of Spanish definite articles can be perceived in the writing samples of learners in their first semester of Spanish study?

2. Does first language transfer influence these developmental patterns?

3. If first language transfer does not occur, what other factors may account for these stages of acquisition?

DATA COLLECTION [1]

The data for answering these questions were collected as described below.

Subjects

The subjects consisted of two groups of English-speaking learners: Group A included nine learners; Group B included ten. All learners were randomly chosen from a first-semester Spanish class.

Instrument

Writing samples of the two groups were gathered in order to provide the basis for a pseudo-longitudinal analysis of article usage. The writing samples were obtained as follows:

1. Group A (9): Writing was collected after 5 weeks of classes.

2. Group B (10): Writing was collected after 15 weeks of classes (Final Exam).

It was not possible to obtain data from the final exam of Group A. For this reason, we collected the writing samples from the final exam of a different group, Group B. It is recognized that this is a flaw in the design of the experiment. The results, therefore, are intended as an indication of what one can expect to find at this time period.

The writing assignment for Group A has five parts. The first four parts consist of oral comprehension exercises from which the learners gather information to use in the fifth part, the actual writing assignment. For this part, the learner writes a letter home of about 100 words. The writing assignment for Group B is a letter of at least 120 words in which the learners follow the description and instructions

provided. This composition is part of the final exam, and there are no preparatory exercises. See Appendix A for a more detailed description of the writing assignments for each group of learners.

Each learner from each group was assigned a number from 1 to 10. A list of noun phrases was created for each learner. Each entry included the following information:

1. Time of data collection (5 weeks or Final)
2. The noun phrase being analyzed plus minimal context
3. The article used
4. The article required

This study analyzed only the usage of the definite articles (singular forms: *el, la;* plural forms: *los, las*). Therefore, all the phrases produced by the learners where the use of a definite article is obligatory in Spanish (T) were counted, and those phrases in which the learners incorrectly used definite articles (I) were included also. The expressions that contained a correct definite article were marked as "C." It should be noted that for the purpose of this study, any form of the definite article (*el, la, los, las*) was counted as correct even if it was used with the wrong noun (for example, **el casa* 'the house'). This decision was reached because we are interested in the learner's selection of definite article over indefinite or zero article and not whether the learner has learned the gender notion in the Spanish noun phrase system. The total definite articles used, regardless of whether they were correctly or incorrectly provided (C + I), was labeled "U." Phrases requiring a definite article in which the learners used a zero article instead were labeled as "N."

Quantitative Analysis

The method of analysis used in this study was adapted from Master's (1988) study. The following notions were derived:

1. ***Correct in Obligatory Context (COC).*** To measure **accuracy** based on Master's proposed concept of "Supplied in Obligatory Context," this figure indicates the number of correct definite articles used (C), divided by the number of correct obligatory contexts in which the article should be used (T).

2. ***Used in Obligatory Context (UOC).*** To analyze **learner usage**, as the "dynamic paradigm" suggests, we divide the number of total definite articles used (U) by the number of obligatory contexts (T).

3. ***Incorrect in Nonobligatory Context (INOC).*** To obtain a complete picture of the usage of articles by learners, we added this notion, which is the number of incorrectly supplied definite articles (I) divided by the total number of definite articles used (U).

4. ***Needed in Obligatory Context (NOC).*** This value is the number of definite articles needed (N) di-

vided by the number of correct obligatory contexts (T).

As Master (1988, p. 9) points out, these notions are necessary to show how often definite articles are being used, regardless of accuracy, and with what degree of target-like use. Table 1 shows the variables and concepts used in this study.

Qualitative Analysis

This study analyzes the article production from the point of view of the relationship between form and function in discourse. We are trying to reveal any hidden systematization (Ellis, 1990, p. 50) in what seems an apparent variation of article production by learners. As mentioned before, we follow Master's (1988) approach and analyze the data in terms of learner usage (dynamic paradigm) and target language accuracy.

In our analysis, like that of Huebner (1983), we omitted proper nouns, idioms, and common expressions such as *en verano/en el verano* 'in summer/in the summer', and *en agosto* 'in August,' which, he observes, may be learned as formu-

Table 1
Definition of Terms
[Adopted from Master's (1988)]

C	Number of articles *correctly* used
I	Number of articles *incorrectly* used
N	Number of articles *needed* but not used
T	*Total* number of articles required (C + N)
U	Number of articles *used* (C + I)
COC	Percentage of correct articles used (C/T * 100)
UOC	Percentage of total articles used (U/T * 100)
INOC	Percentage of incorrect articles used (I/U * 100)
NOC	Percentage of articles needed (N/T * 100)

Measures:

	Needed	Not Needed
Used	C	I
Not Used	N	

lae. We included phrases such as *en/por la mañana* 'in the morning' and *regresar a casa/regresar a la casa* 'come back home,' however, even though these expressions are also learned as formulae, because we found some learners omitted the required articles in these noun phrases, and we wanted to seek the pattern behind this usage.

RESULTS

Analysis of Data

We begin our analysis by calculating the results per group. Tables 2A and 2B present a summary of the quantitative results. For Group A, we tallied a total of 104 obligatory contexts. The accuracy registered was 83%, with 86 articles correctly supplied and 18 places where the articles were required but not provided (17% NOC). The group, however, supplied 19 extra articles not required (18% INOC). Group B had a total of 90 correct obligatory contexts and provided 92 definite articles (102% UOC, which is the same percentage for Group A). The group's accuracy (COC) was 80%, a little lower than that of Group A. They supplied, however, more unnecessary definite

Table 2
Distribution of Definite Article Usage

A. Group A

LEV	STU	T	U	C	I	N	COC	UOC	INO-C	NOC
							%	%	%	%
5wk	1	5	2	2	0	3	40	40	0	60
	2	18	21	17	4	1	94	117	19	6
	3	3	1	1	0	2	33	33	0	67
	4	8	6	6	0	2	75	75	0	25
	5	22	22	19	3	3	86	100	14	14
	6	13	14	12	2	1	92	108	14	8
	7	13	12	10	2	3	77	92	17	23
	8	10	10	9	0	1	90	100	0	10
	9	12	18	10	8	2	83	150	44	17
		104	106	86	19	18	83	102	18	17

Table 2
Distribution of Definite Article Usage *(Continued)*

B. Group B

LEV	STU	T	U	C	I	N	COC	UOC	INO-C	NOC
							%	%	%	%
Fin	1	3	3	2	1	1	67	100	33	33
	2	13	12	11	1	2	85	92	8	15
	3	5	6	5	1	0	100	120	17	0
	4	7	10	7	3	0	100	143	30	0
	5	4	4	2	2	1	50	100	50	25
	6	9	16	9	7	0	100	177	44	0
	7	12	10	7	3	5	58	83	30	42
	8	15	11	11	0	4	73	73	0	27
	9	10	7	6	1	4	60	70	14	40
	10	12	13	12	1	0	100	108	8	0
		90	92	72	20	17	80	102	22	19

articles (22% INOC) than Group A (18%); also, the number of definite articles needed but not supplied produced a slightly higher percentage in Group B (19% NOC) than Group A (17% NOC).

Although the difference between the results of Group A and B does not seem to be significant, individual results are revealing and supportive of the tendencies observed in the general results. In Group A, as we already have pointed out, learners used fewer incorrect articles in non-obligatory contexts than Group B. It is interesting to see that out of the nine learners from Group A, four of them did not supply any extra incorrect articles (I), which means they have less overuse of articles than learners from Group B. Among the other five, the number of incorrect articles in non-obligatory contexts for all but one was less than 20%. Only one learner had a higher percentage (44%). The

results from Group B are also revealing. As noticed before, their number of incorrect articles in non-obligatory contexts as a group was slightly higher (22%). Their individual performances confirm these data: all but one learner supplied extra articles (I) not required, and five of the learners showed percentages of 30% or more.

The results shown by the number of articles required but not supplied support the tendencies noticed so far. Even though, as a group, learners from Group B seem to lack more needed articles than do learners from Group A (Group A had a 17% NOC versus 19% from Group B), a look at the individual tendencies shows a different picture: 4 out of 10 learners from Group B did not use articles at all. The rest of the learners of this group showed percentages of 40% or less. The data from Group A learners show that all were lacking articles that were obligatory. Two of these learners, in particular, showed underuse of articles in obligatory contexts over 50%.

In general, then, the errors detected in the two groups seem to be related to the difference of data collection times. The writing samples of Group A show that learners, after 5 weeks of classes, tended to omit required articles; meanwhile, the data collected from Group B show a different error after 15 weeks of classes, that of the overuse of articles, possibly due to the learners having entered a stage of experimentation after the longer exposure to Spanish.

Stages of Acquisition

The analysis of the data suggests that learners go through certain stages in the acquisition of articles in Spanish. We propose the following stages of acquisition shown in Appendix B, although the stages and suggested order are tentative. A true longitudinal study must be done before arriving at definite conclusions.

Stage 1. Omission of the Definite Article. This stage is demonstrated by the omission of articles even in formulaic expressions such as *en/por la mañana* 'in the morning,' *los sábados* 'on Saturdays,' etc., regardless of the fact that similar expressions are found in English (for example, **Limpio el apartamento todos __ días mañana* 'I clean the apartment every day in the mornings').

This stage is supported by the following observations: All learners from Group A wrote sentences lacking a required article. Two of those learners failed to use required articles more than 50% of the time. In contrast, four learners from Group B did not have this problem at all (0% NOC), which means that they did not produce sentences like **todos _ días* 'everyday' or **no me gusta _ trabajo* 'I don't like my job.' Also, for no Group B learner did the percentage of sentences that lacked required articles exceed 42%.

Stage 2. Overuse of Articles (The* los*-Stage). In this stage, learners use definite articles in non-obligatory contexts. This stage seems to reflect an increased awareness of articles, because learners start to overuse them.

Observations that support this stage are the following: Group B had 22% of incorrect articles in non-

obligatory contexts. All learners from this group, with one exception, produced unnecessary articles (e.g., **El estudiante necesite traer* los *blue jeans,* los *pantalones,* las *camisas, y* las *camisetas. También necesite traer* los *zapatos,* las *botas, y suéteres* 'The student needs to bring blue jeans, pants, shirts, and T-shirts. He also needs to bring shoes, boots, and sweaters').

Group A had 18% of incorrect articles in non-obligatory contexts. Four learners from this group did not make this error (0% INOC). All this may be evidence that there is a direct correlation between the overuse of definite articles and the time of data collection. Thus, as mentioned before, as the learner is exposed to more Spanish, the incidence of overusing the articles increases, and learners supply articles even in a context where English may not require them (*e.g., The learner needs to bring _blue jeans, _pants, etc.).*

An additional observation is that learners from both groups tended to overuse articles when faced with a string of nouns. Six learners from Group A produced strings of nouns (list of classes or of clothing), and five of them overused the definite article. All the learners from Group B produced strings of nouns, with six of them having more than one string. In particular, learners 4, 5, and 6, who produced two sets of strings each, had one set in which the definite articles were overused and one set in which other articles or a combination of definite, indefinite, and zero articles was used. Learner 6, for example, wrote **El estudiante necesite traer* los *blue jeans,* los *pantalones,* las *camisas, y* las *camisetas. También necesite* los *zapatos,* las *botas y* los *suéteres* 'The student needs to bring blue jeans, pants, shirts and T-shirts. He also needs to bring shoes, boots, and sweaters' but he also wrote: *Los estudiante y yo jugamos Ø futbol Americano, Ø beisbol, Ø tenis, y Ø futbol* 'The students and I play football, baseball, tennis, and soccer.' It seems that learners from Group B began to use all of the articles more than learners from Group A in the same environment of listing elements, which brings us to the next stage [2].

Stage 3. Vacillation. After overusing articles, learners seem to go through a period of inconsistency in their selection of articles, called here *a stage of experimentation.* At first, they appear to choose articles (definite, indefinite, or zero article) at random; however, we noticed a subtle, systematic use of articles. Learners seem to make their own rules of usage based on number, and once they have made a rule, they seem to follow it consistently in any given string. As with the previous stage, it is important to notice that this rule seems to apply when the learners see *a string of nouns.*

The following are some of the patterns detected:

1. Three learners of Group B used definite articles with plural nouns and indefinite articles with singular nouns. For example,

   **. . . también el estudiante necesita llevar* los *suéteres y* un *abrigo.*

'. . . also, the student needs to bring sweaters and a coat.'

2. One learner from Group A showed this tendency to use definite articles with plural nouns as well, although he used the zero article with the singular. For example,

   **Tomo 0 español, y 0 clase de niños developmental, y las matimáticas, y las ciencias.*
   'I am taking Spanish, child development, math, and sciences.'

3. One learner from Group B preferred the zero article with plurals and definite with singulars. For example,

   **Necesite dos pars de blujeans, 0 zapatos de tenis, la chaqueta, 0 botas, y 0 suéteres, 0 faldas.*
   '(She) needs two pairs of blue jeans, tennis shoes, a jacket, boots, sweaters, and skirts.'

4. One learner from Group B used the indefinite article for plurals and singulars. For example,

   Diga al estudiante traer unos *pantalones cortos y* unas *camisetas para llevar en verano y otoño, y* unos *blue jeans y* una *chaqueta para llevar en invierno.*
   'Tell the student to bring some shorts and some T-shirts to wear in summer and fall, and some blue jeans and a jacket to wear in winter.'

Stage 4. Grammatical Stage. Learners in this stage show correct usage of articles (definite, indefinite, and zero articles). The accuracy seems to increase as the learner is exposed to more Spanish. This level does not seem to be a consistent stage among beginning learners, however. It should be remembered that both groups of learners are beginners. The same learner could write a good sentence at one point of the assignment (e.g., *diga al estudiante traer* unos *pantalones, 0 suéteres, y* un *abrigo* 'tell the learner to bring some pants, sweaters, and a coat') and an incorrect one in the same assignment (e.g.,**Hola director de* los *estudiantes extranjeros* 'Hello, director of foreign students').

Some observations follow: Only one learner from Group A produced this kind of string with grammatical phrases, compared to four learners from Group B. Four learners from Group B had an accuracy rate of 100%. The highest accuracy rate in Group A was 94%. The lowest accuracy rate in Group B was 58%, compared to the two lowest of 33% and 40% in Group A. Again, all this suggests a correlation with the difference of data collection time between the two groups. The accuracy rate was lower in the writing samples collected after 5 weeks (Group A) than the accuracy rate observed in the data gathered after 15 weeks of classes (Group B).

DISCUSSION

These findings are not consistent with the strong form of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which assumes that interference occurs as a result of L1 transfer and states that "errors could be predicted by identifying the linguistic differences between the learners' L1 and

the target language" (Ellis, 1990, p. 29). In the compilation of occurrences due to L1 transfer, we found both groups have similar results. Out of the 47 sentences with errors produced by Group A, 16 (34%) were identified as due to L1 transfer (e.g., *En *lunes miramos un hombre toca la guitarra. . .* 'On Mondays, we watch a man playing the guitar. . .'). Learners from Group B included in their writings 37 sentences with errors, 13 of which (35%) were due to L1 transfer (e.g., **Lago Travis es muy bonito* 'Lake Travis is pretty'). This relatively significant incidence of L1 transfer agrees more with the weak form of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which states that L1 interference may explain some errors, but it is only one of many factors in the acquisition and cannot "be treated as a major source of error" (Ellis, 1990, p. 29). Moreover, as shown by our results, the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis does not seem to explain the variability of errors observed in the usage of definite articles.

Results from our study suggest support of the Interlanguage Theory premise outlined by Ellis (1990) that suggests that learners construct a system of transitional linguistic rules with which they are continually experimenting in their approximation toward the target language. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that learners in the vacillation stage seem to develop a rule for article usage based on the plural or singular suffix of the noun. As Master (1988) suggests, the variation reflects certain strategies of interlanguage development, which can be seen in the learners' actual use of morphemes at different interlanguage levels [3]. In this way, as proposed by Corder (1967), their interlanguage system can be seen as a restructuring or recreating continuum.

Moreover, VanPatten's (1987) ideas on a natural order of acquisition may explain our results. He proposes the interaction of four factors to explain the order of acquisition. At the beginning, learners may fail to perceive the *communicative value* in articles and omit them (Stage 1, Omission) even in phrases that have similar constructions in English (e.g., *in the morning*, etc.) When learners discover that Spanish articles occur more frequently than in English (*frequency of input*), they *simplify* the rules of usage, thinking that Spanish articles are used in every context, and start using the articles indiscriminately (Stage 2, Overuse and Stage 3, Vacillation). *First language transfer*, as proposed by Andersen (1983), may also be responsible for the Vacillation Stage. When the learners enter a period of experimentation in their interlanguage development, they mistakenly perceive a similarity between the usage of Spanish and English articles. The role of L1, however, is limited "to those stages when there is convergence between L1 structure/function and developing interlanguage" (VanPatten, 1987, p. 111). VanPatten adds, "The interaction between L1 interference and interlanguage cannot violate the natural processes of acquisition that are in progress."

Another explanation for some of the stages proposed in this study, particularly the overuse of the definite articles, may be found in the sys-

tem used to learn vocabulary. The textbook used at this university, *Puntos de Partida* (Dorwick et al., 1993) presents a list of nouns with their corresponding definite articles in order to help the learners in the acquisition of the Spanish gender. As VanPatten (1989) cautions, however, learners at this early stage of acquisition may have difficulty attending to form in the input, because at the same time they are struggling to understand the meaning. Tomlin and Vila (1984), on the other hand, suggest that the learning of grammar can be enhanced when the learner somehow attends to form. This issue needs further study in order to isolate the causes for the overuse of definite articles.

CONCLUSIONS

Besides supporting previous studies that postulate a Natural Order of Acquisition, this study sheds light in an area of second language acquisition that has been neglected: the acquisition of Spanish articles by English-speakers. Several stages of acquisition were proposed in response to Research Question 1, based on what was observed in the writing samples of two groups of an introductory Spanish course. These stages are tentative since more research is needed to test these findings. Although we analyzed the writing assignments of two different groups at different times during the semester, both groups are still considered beginners.

Again, we stress the need for true longitudinal studies of the acquisition of definite articles as well as indefinite and zero articles. These studies are needed for comparison purposes in order to develop a more complete picture of the acquisition of these morphemes. Also required are studies that test the oral proficiency of learners with respect to definite articles. In general, as Parrish and Tarone (1988) have done, multitask research is needed in order to observe any task-related variation in the acquisition stages.

We found interesting results in response to the second and third research questions. Some L1 transfer errors were observed, and the percentages of L1 interference were very similar in both groups. L1 interference, however, seems to be one of four factors that interact as part of the interlanguage development that learners go through in their natural process of acquisition, as proposed by VanPatten (1987). These factors (L1 transfer, simplification, communicative value, and frequency of input) were useful in accounting for the stages of acquisition proposed in this study. The interlanguage issues outlined by Ellis (1990) were other factors in agreement with our results that could account for the variability observed in the learners' usage of definite articles.

NOTES

1 For this study I have a small corpus of data; therefore, any results obtained should still be considered tentative. This is a pilot study, and I would like to share my observations based on the data collected. These findings may serve as the foundation for questions that can be looked at in the future.

2 The analysis of the use of the other articles is beyond the scope

of this study; however, we noticed that when faced with a string of nouns, Group B learners tended to overuse all the articles (including the indefinite), while learners from Group A used only definite and zero articles.

3 In his study, Master (1988) established the interlanguage level of his subjects by their use of the negation morpheme (p. 10).

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APPENDIX A
WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

WRITING ASSIGNMENT FOR GROUP A. There are five parts to this writing assignment. Parts 1 and 2 are done the first day. Part 3 and Part 4 are given as homework for the second day. The third day, the students do the actual writing assignment in the computer lab.

Parte 1: Lectura 'Reading' (This reading was read by the instructor in class. He wrote some of the main points in the blackboard:)

La Universidad de Texas, fundada en 1883, es un lugar muy atractivo para los estudiantes extranjeros. Más de 3500 estudiantes de más de 100 países asisten a UT. Esta universidad tiene unas bibliotecas extraordinarias, incluída la Nettie Benson Latin American Collection, una de las mejores colecciones de libros sobre Latinoamérica en el mundo.

Además de su fama académica, UT está situada en una ciudad preciosa. A los estudiantes extranjeros les gusta la vida cultural (los conciertos de música clásica, los museos, las conferencias), el clima, los parques, y los lagos de Austin. También les gustan las atracciones turísticas como el capitolio, la biblioteca presidencial de LBJ, la famosa Calle Seis, y los murciélagos que viven debajo del puente de la Calle Congress.

Para los estudiantes que necesitan perfeccionar su inglés antes de matricularse en UT, hay un programa excelente llamado Texas Intensive English Program en Dexter Hall en la Calle 24 cerca del campus. A veces estos estudiantes vienen a las clases de español para hablar con los estudiantes americanos sobre sus países de origen.

'The University of Texas, founded in 1883, is a very attractive place for foreign students. More than 3500 students from more than 100 countries attend UT. This university has great libraries, including the Nettie Benson Latin American Collection, one of the best collections of books on Latin America in the world.

'Besides its academic fame, UT is situated in a beautiful city. Foreign learners like Austin's cultural life (classical music concerts, museums, conferences), its weather, its parks, and its lakes. They also like its tourist attractions like the Capitol, the LBJ Library, the famous Sixth Street, and the bats that live under the bridge on Congress Street.

'For students who need to improve their English before enrolling at UT, there is an excellent program called *Texas Intensive English Program* at Dexter Hall on 24th Street, near campus. Sometimes these students come to Spanish classes to talk with American students about their countries.'

Parte 2: Comprensión oral 'Listening comprehension' (The students do not see the script. The instructor reads this to them and then asks the four follow-up questions.)

Pepe Ramos es un estudiante extranjero que estudia química en la Universidad de Texas. Es de Limón, Costa Rica. Es la primera vez que vive lejos de su familia. Ahora vive en la residencia Jester con su compañero de cuarto que se llama Joe Weaver. Joe es de Lubbock. Pepe tiene sus momentos tristes, pero le gustan sus clases y su compañero de cuarto. No le gusta la comida de Jester por eso va a vivir en un apartamento el semestre que viene.

'Pepe Ramos is a foreign student who studies chemistry at the University of Texas. He is from Limón, Costa Rica. It is the first time he is away from his family. Now he lives at Jester with his roommate Joe Weaver. Joe is from Lubbock. Pepe has his sad moments, but he likes his classes and his roommate. He does not like the food at Jester, that is why he is going to live in an apartment next semester.'

Parte 3. *Preguntas* 'Questions':

¿De dónde es Pepe? 'Where is Pepe from?'
¿Qué estudia Pepe? 'What does Pepe study?'
¿Por qué tiene sus momentos tristes? 'Why does he have sad moments?'
¿Qué desea hacer el semestre que viene? 'What does he want to do next semester?'

Parte 4: Práctica oral 'Oral practice.' The instructor has students put the sentences on the board as they come in before class starts the following day. The instructor corrects them as a class.

Parte 5: Escritura 'Writing.' After the above four parts have been completed, students write the writing assignment, which is a letter written home by Pepe, the student from Costa Rica, or by Yoly, the Peruvian student. The letter should be about 100 words. They are given the *Querida Mamá* 'Dear mom' and different ways to sign *Abrazos* 'hugs' or *Besos* 'kisses.' They do this assignment in the Computer Lab.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT FOR GROUP B. The following are the instructions for a composition that students write as part of their final exam.

Composición 'Composition.' Write a composition of at least 120 words following the description provided. Remember to include at least three command forms in your composition.

Your family will be hosting a Costa Rican student. You are the only one who speaks Spanish in your family. Your parents have asked you to write a letter to the director of the program to give him the following information:

- Greet the director and introduce yourself and your family.
- Since the exchange student is coming from August to January, tell the director what kind of weather to expect and what kind of clothing a person needs to bring.
- Compare Austin to other cities in Texas.
- Then tell him that you have studied Spanish this year and that you are going to help the student in Austin.
- Describe some of the forms of entertainment in the Austin area.
- Tell what interesting things you did this year.
- Tell him to write back with any question he might have.

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE SENTENCES OF THE PROPOSED STAGES AND L1 INTERFERENCE

1. Omission of Definite Articles.

Example: **Limpio el apartmento todos Ø dias Ø mañana.*
'I clean the apartment every day in the morning.'

The *los*-stage.

Example: **Las clases llevo la geología, la matématica, y la español.*
'The classes I am taking are geology, math, and Spanish.'

Example: **El estudiante necesite traer los blue jeans, los pantalones, las camisas, y las camisetas. También necesite traer los zapatos, las botas, y los suéteres.*
'The student needs to bring blue jeans, pants, shirts, and T-shirts. He also needs to bring shoes, boots, and sweaters.'

3. Vacillation.

Definite article with plurals; indefinite article with singulars.

Example: **. . . debe llever los blue jeans, las camisetas y uno o dos chaquetas . . . también el estudiante necesita llevar los suéteres y un abrigo.*
'. . . he should bring blue jeans, T-shirts, and one or two jackets . . . also, the student needs to bring sweaters, and a coat.'

Definite for plurals; zero articles for singulars.

Example: **Tomo Ø español, y Ø clase de niños developmental, y las matimáticas, y las ciencias.*
'I am taking Spanish, child development, math, and sciences.'

Zero article for plurals; definite article for singulars.

Example: **Necesite dos pars de blue jeans, Ø zapatos de tenis, la chaqueta, Ø botas, Ø suéteres, y Ø faldas.*
'(She) needs two pairs of blue jeans, tennis shoes, a jacket, boots, sweaters, and skirts.'

Indefinite for plurals and singulars.

Example: *Diga al estudiante traer unos pantalones cortos y unas camisetas para llevar en verano y otoño, y unos blue jeans y una chaqueta para llevar en invierno.*
'Tell the student to bring some shorts, and some T-shirts to wear in summer and fall, and some blue jeans and a jacket to wear in winter.'

4. Grammatical stage.

Example: *Necesite llevar un suéter, una chaqueta, y Ø ropa para la invierno.*
'(He) needs to bring a sweater, a jacket, and clothing for winter.'

L1 interference examples:

Ø Lago Travis es muy bonito.
'Lake Travis is pretty.'

En Tejas, todo Ø año hace un buen tiempo.
'In Texas, all year long the weather is nice.'

En lunes miramos un hombre toca la guitarra....
'On Mondays, we watch a man playing the guitar....'